(ii) In consonance with New Telecom Policy (NTP) 1999 & TRAI recommendations, the Guidelines for Unified Access Services (UAS) licences issued on 14.12.2005 are the extant guidelines for grant of new UAS licence. All UAS licences issued in year 2008 are governed by these detailed guidelines. These guidelines, *inter-alia* stipulate that "Licences shall be issued without any restriction on the number of entrants for provision of Unified Access Services in a Service Area." When entry conditions are fixed and licensing is being done without any restriction of number of licences, there can not be any other transparent method other than the method of First-Come-First-Served basis. The Parliament was also informed of this policy from time to time in reply to questions raised therein.

(iii) DOT (Department of Telecom) has been implementing a policy of First-Come-First Served for grant of UAS licences under which initially an application which is received first will be processed first and thereafter if found eligible will be granted LOI and then whosoever complies with the conditions of LOI first will be granted UAS licence. This stand of DoT regarding the award of UAS Licenses on first come first served basis was clarified by Press release dated 10.01.2008 and accordingly, the UAS licences were granted in year 2008.

(iv) As per the UAS licence guidelines dated 14.12.2005 and the provisions of the UAS licence agreement, there were no lock-in-period/restriction on sale of equity/ issuance of additional equity shares by the licensee company. Such transactions including the ceiling limit of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) were subject to extant guidelines of the Government/Statutory Bodies.

There were news articles regarding sale of equity by two new telecom licensee companies. However, these companies informed DOT that their shareholder/promoters have not sold the equity and the investments have been brought in by their foreign partners by subscribing to additional equity which would be used for rolling out the services.

Government, in consultation with the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), decided that there shall be a Lock-in-period for sale of equity of a person whose share capital is 10% or more in the UAS licensee company on the effective date of the UAS licence till completion of three years from the effective date of the licence or till fulfillment of all the rollout obligations, whichever is earlier, subject to certain other conditions. In this regard, necessary amendment of the UAS licence agreement(s) has been issued on 23.07.2009.

The above issues alongwith certain other issues are presently before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi in writ petition No. 7815/2008 in the matter of Dr. Arvind Gupta Vs UOI & others and the matter is sub-judice.

Financial assistance for RTI

*219. SHRI THOMAS SANGMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any communication from the State Governments seeking financial assistance for implementing the Right to Information Act; and

(b) the details in this regard and along with the details of the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government to provide States with the financial assistance required to implement the RTI Act during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) State Governments like the Government of Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Uttarakhand had sought Central assistance for implementation of the Right to Information Act, 2005. The Parliament has, by law, cast an obligation on the State Governments to implement the Act. The State Governments are required to meet the statutory obligation out of their own funds. However, the Government has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which funds are provided, *inter-alia*, for strengthening the State Information Commission (SIC) and for capacity building on RTI through the State level Administrative Training Institute (ATI). In this regard, a sum of Rs.4.90 crore has been released to the State Information Commissions during 2008-09 and 2009-10 under the scheme and a sum of Rs.3.27 crore to the Administrative Training Institutes during these periods.

Problems of PIOs

†*220. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there exists any mechanism to hear and understand the problems being faced by the persons of Indian origin in various countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) The Ministry holds annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conventions, thus creating a platform for Overseas Indians including PIOs to voice their concerns and expectations from the Government of India. Seven such Conventions have been held so far since 2003.

In addition to this flagship annual event of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, an effort is made to reach out to sections of the vast overseas Indian community, who are unable to participate in the annual Conventions held in India, by holding mini versions of the PBD Conventions at places abroad on a regional basis by rotation. Three such regional mini PBDs have been held at New York (2007), Singapore (2008) and the Hague (2009).

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi